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AUTHOR McPherson, Kathleen Morrow
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ABSTRACT

Effects of a high school social studies unit on student knowledge of and attitudes toward shoplifting are studied. The hypothesis was that a unit which imparted up to date information about shoplifting and its consequences could affect a change in student knowledge and attitudes. The unit was pilot tested with 197 high school students. Student responses on content and attitude tests before and after participation were compared with responses of 179 students in control classes. The unit emphasized general information about shoplifting and shoplifters, consideration of whether shoplifting is right or wrong, and an overview of legal procedures and possible consequences of shoplifting. Statistical analysis of pre- and posttest scores of students in experimental and control groups indicated that students receiving instruction about shoplifting knew considerably more about shoplifting and its consequences. Findings also indicated, however, that there was no statistically significant attitude change regarding shoplifting among students who had participated in the unit. (DB)

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF A SHOP-LIFTING CURRICULUM FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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By Kathleen Morrow McPherson

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Headnote

Shoplifting is one of the fastest growing crimes against property in the United States. This study was designed to evaluate the effect on the attitudes of students of in-school instruction about shoplifting. The curriculum unit developed was tested in secondary schools and the kits are presently being utilized in all grade schools and sixth grade centers in the Austin Independent School District in order to determine the effects of such moral instruction on younger students.

Introduction

Shoplifting, the removal of merchandise from a store by a person who has no intention of paying for it, has become a major crime in the United States. Information provided by the Austin Police Department indicates:

> Shoplifting is one of the fastest growing crimes against property in the United States. It is estimated that approximately one-third of all property stolen is the result of the shoplifter. Shoplifting has grown to the extent that in 1974, more property was lost to the shoplifter than to the burglar and the armed robber combined (1, p. v-6).

This upsurge in shoplifting is the result of several factors. One of the more significant factors has been the increase in the number of self-service stores. This type of store was designed to decrease the number of clerks needed, thereby reducing overhead costs. Having fewer personnel has actually made shoplifting much easier.

A second factor affecting increases in shoplifting is the method of merchandising products in the stores. Display techniques designed to guide the customer into impulsive buying have actually encouraged impulsive "stealing." A third, less tangible, factor may reflect a change in values, moral standards, and lifestyles. Increases in varying degrees of boredom, competitiveness, and opportunism, combined with the present financial and employment conditions of the country, tend to lessen the conviction that shoplifting is a crime. These changing attitudes toward shoplifting pose interesting questions about the part education plays in the moral development of young people.

Young people today have many opportunities to test and question their beliefs and values. Their value structures are developed through interaction with other people in various situations inside and outside the home. Because

teenagers are in school a large part of the day, their interaction with teachers and peers influences, to a great extent, the development of their values and value structure.

Conflict exists concerning teaching of the valuing process in the classroom. Many people hold that schools should teach only facts. Others maintain that when instruction takes place without valuing, no education occurs at all (5). Dickens claims that school is the logical place for young people to discover and determine the values which underlie their decisions and activities. Dickens asserts that values are not separate from knowledge, but actually determine what knowledge is important to them (2).

For many young people, high school is a period of examination and experimentation. This is also a period of increased peer pressure. Shoplifting is one area of great peer influence. Amatuer shoplifters commit approximately 80 to 90 percent of the shoplifting done each year. Facts presented in the article "Everything Has A Price" from the Texas Retailer indicate that over 50 percent of the shoplifters apprehended were between the ages of 13 and 19 years of age. Most teenage shoplifters do not take items to sell, and they are not usually involved with drugs. They take items for their personal use--for example, clothes, records, cosmetics, and jewelry. Most teenage shoplifters are female from families with above-average income and steal in neighborhood stores or shopping centers (3).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine whether the use of specifically designed curriculum materials could bring about a significant change in secondary school students' knowledge and attitudes concerning shoplifting. Teenagers, ages 14 to 18 were chosen because this age group represents over

fifty percent of all the shoplifters apprehended. This age group was also accessible to the researcher and presented a reasonable homogeneous sample for testing purposes.

Conclusions from a review of literature suggests that the adolescent period of development is indeed a very formative period in the growth process. It was the author's belief that a properly designed curriculum could affect a significant change in student's attitudes toward shoplifting. Students must have accurate, up-to-date information about shoplifting in order to make sound decisions. With proper information and a good self-concept it is anticipated that peer pressure will not override the personal decision-making abilities of individuals concerning whether or not to shoplift.

Scope and Description of the Project

Many school personnel believe that classroom information has very little effect on students when compared with the social values and attitudes learned in the home. Admittedly, the learning process begins in the home. However, because young people spend increasing amounts of time in school, teachers and peers contribute significantly to that process. Recognizing the role of the school, the "Stamp Out Shoplifting" curriculum unit was developed in cooperation with the Crime Prevention and Drug Education program of the Education Service Center, Region XIII, and the Austin Independent School District.

The "Stamp Out Shoplifting" unit is a self-contained instructional package. The unit contains one curriculum guide, two filmstrip and tape presentations, one bulletin board, four posters, and 19 transparencies. Materials were developed for use by classroom instructors and did not require prior training on the part of the instructor. Great care was taken in the

development of the materials to insure that techniques of shoplifting were not illustrated, taught, or described to the students.

The unit was divided into three areas of instruction:

1. Start With the Facts - General information and facts about shoplifting and shoplifters.

2. Options We Have - An open-ended presentation of whether it is right or wrong to shoplift.

3. State Your Case - Legal procedures and possible consequences of shoplifting.

Information was included in each section to supply the instructor with necessary background data to teach the shoplifting unit and to answer students' questions. This information was carefully researched and provided up-to-date resources for teaching presentations and activities. The instructional unit was designed to be an intensive three-day curriculum. A sufficient number of optional activities were included in the guide to allow instructors to expand the unit to five or ten days if they so desire.

Included in the curriculum guide are an attitude survey and shoplifting evaluation for pre- and post-testing of students receiving the instruction. Questions on the evaluation instrument were specifically developed and keyed to objectives for each section. The evaluation instrument was designed to test the knowledge of students, and the survey instrument was designed to test attitudes toward shoplifting (Table I).

In addition to testing of specific objectives additional factors were considered. These factors were: 1) the students must be able to understand the language used in the testing instruments without interpretation from the teacher; 2) the instruments must be short enough to maintain a high interest

level on the part of the students; and 3) considering the large numbers of students to be tested, the instruments must be designed for ease of scoring.

A 25-item shoplifting evaluation was designed using a combination of ten multiple-choice items and 15 true-false items. The multiple-choice items were designed using incomplete statements with four possible choices, one of which correctly completed the statement.

The attitude survey was designed to complement the information gained from the shoplifting evaluation. It was composed of 18 items. Each of the items was characterized by four degrees of responses ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Students were given the option to leave blank any items which caused them to feel uncomfortable.

Preliminary instruments were given to high school teachers, high school counselors, and selected high school students to assess the readability, interest level, and efficiency of the items. Information given by the reviewers was used to revise the items.

Testing of the Shoplifting Curriculum Unit

The purpose of pilot testing the unit was two-fold. One objective was to determine whether or not high school students' attitudes about a specific subject or moral issue could be altered with the presentation of factual information. In addition, the testing sought to determine whether or not increased knowledge about a specific issue affects the decisions people make about their moral behavior in that area.

The test high school chosen for pilot testing the curriculum unit was selected for several reasons. The school, located on the far southern edge of the city, has a large urban population with a fairly large rural population. The students were predominately from the middle socio-economic level with a few from the lower socio-economic level. Although the majority of the stu-

dents live in the surrounding urban community, approximately 30 percent of the students are bussed from the rural areas or other areas of the city to achieve a racial balance in the school. The control school is similar in every respect, except that it is located on the far northern edge of the city. This location was advantageous since interaction between the two student populations is minimal.

Four teaching areas were selected for pilot testing the unit. The areas chosen were homemaking, social studies, math, and vocational cooperative education programs. These particular areas were chosen because the shoplifting information could supplement regular course work and also reach large numbers of students in the required areas of math and social studies. Homemaking incorporated the study into a consumer buying unit; social studies used the materials in psychology and law courses; math integrated the unit into consumer awareness courses; and vocational cooperative programs used the unit to complement on-the-job studies. Teachers volunteered if they felt the unit could fit into their regular plan of study for a specific course being taught.

Teachers from the same content areas were chosen in the control school. Teachers in the control school administered the pre-test evaluation and survey at the beginning of the winter quarter and the post-test evaluation and survey at the end of the quarter. No curriculum unit materials were furnished the control school and students in the control school received no instruction.

A total of 15 teachers participated in the project, and a total of 376 students received either testing or testing and instruction. Four teachers and 179 students were involved in the control school and eleven teachers and 197 students participated in the teaching in the experimental school.

The shoplifting unit was tested during the winter quarter of the school year and teachers were encouraged to teach the unit during December, the peak shoplifting period. Teachers were instructed to pre-test all students using the attitude survey and the shoplifting evaluation. Teachers were given the option of teaching only a part of the unit or the entire unit. At the conclusion of the unit the attitude survey and shoplifting evaluation were administered to students as post-tests. Absolute anonymity was maintained for all students involved in the testing in both the test and control schools.

Results of the Findings

The study was conducted to determine if materials developed and taught in high school classrooms concerning shoplifting could affect significant changes in knowledge of facts and attitudes toward shoplifting. A quasi-experimental design with an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical test was used to analyze the data in the study because of the use of two groups with pre- and post-testing. The data were subjected to the EDSTAT routines, a system of computer programs for educational statistical analysis.

An item analysis of the percentage of right and wrong answers on the pre- and post-tests by the experimental and control groups reveals that on six items, items 2, 6, 7, 14, and 22, of the shoplifting evaluation there was more than a 25 percent gain in the scores of the experimental group (see Table 2). The greatest gain by the control students on these name questions was an eight percent increase. The control group had score losses from the pre- to the post-test on two items. Item 6 had a one percent loss; item 7, a six percent loss.

Scores on eight items from the shoplifting evaluation showed students in the experimental group making a ten to 24 percent gain. Items reflecting

this gain were items 1, 3, 5, 13, 18, 19, 20, and 21. On these eight items the control students did not know more than a nine percent gain. Losses on scores, ranging from two to eight points, were experienced by the control group on four items. These items were items 5, 13, 18, and 20. On item 19 the control group had the same percentage of correct responses on both the pre- and post-tests.

The above data show that a total of 14 of the 25 items on the shoplifting evaluation reflect a gain in the experimental students' scores of ten percent or more. Five items, however, experienced a loss in scores when the pre- and post-test scores were compared. These were items 8, 9, 10, 17, and 23, which had a three to ten percent loss. Another item, item 16, had the same percentage correct on both tests. Of these six items the control group also experienced losses on items 9 and 23, but the control group had a five percent gain on item 17.

Each of the 14 items, which showed a gain of ten percent or greater by the experimental group, was statistically significant when tested at the .05 level of significance (see Table 3). In fact, all of the items were statistically significant at the .01 level or less. The 11 remaining items were not statistically significant. Two items, however, approached the .05 significance level. These two items were item 25 which had a .07 level of significance and item 24, with a .09 level of significance.

Percentage gains on the attitude survey made by students' receiving instruction are presented in Table 4. The gains were much smaller for items on the attitude survey than on the shoplifting evaluation. Only two items, items 2 and 9, showed a gain which exceeded 25 percent. Item 2 showed this gain for the scores of students in the experimental group, but item 9 showed this gain for thw scores of students in the control group. For item 2 the

gain was six percent. For item 9, the experimental group achieved a seven percent gain. Only one item, item 18, showed a gain of 10 to 24 percent. Students in the experimental group showed a 13 percent score increase on that item.

In spite of a 25 percent gain by the experimental group on item 2, it did not show a statistically significant difference when tested at the .05 level of significance. An examination of the data in Table 5 reveals that the item was not significant because the control group had a very high correct score on the pre-test, which prevented a large gain on the post-test. Items 9 and 18 were statistically significant when tested at the .05 level of significance; however, item 9 was significant for the control group rather than the experimental group. An additional item, item 12, was statistically significant at the .05 level. This was true although the experimental group made only a five percent gain from the pre- to the post-test scores. On this item the control group had a 10 percent loss on their score. An analysis of variance was computed on the total scores of the pre- and post-attitude surveys. The gains by the experimental students were statistically significant at the .05 level.

Because each item on the shoplifting evaluation and the entire survey were developed to correspond to an objective in the curriculum unit, the data were examined to determine if the objectives were met. As noted in Table 1, ten of the 13 objectives had at least one test item which was statistically significant. Three of these ten objectives had two statistically significant test items; another had three test items which were significant. The three objectives which did not have a statistically significant test item were Objectives I-1, II-1, and III-2 (4).

REFERENCES

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2. Dickens, Mary Ellen. "Values, Schools, and Human Development," The Clearing House, April 1974, pp. 431-439.
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TABLE 1

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES WITH CORRESPONDING SIGNIFICANT ASSESSMENT ITEMS

Behavioral Objective	Assessment Items
Section I:	
1. Define shoplifting.	10
2. State facts which illustrate the increase in the incidences and costs of shoplifting.	7,* 2*
3. State reasons for the increases in shoplifting.	1,* 20*
4. Identify the types of shoplifters.	3*, 13*
5. Distinguish characteristics of shoplifters.	15, 3,* 5,* 6,* 8, 18*
6. Recall reasons various people shoplift.	21*
7. Identify consequences of shoplifting on the shoplifter and on others.	17, 22,* 25
Section II:	
1. Identify values emerging in our society which contribute to the increase in shoplifting.	24
2. Interpret his/her attitudes toward shoplifting.	Attitude survey*

TABLE 1 continued

Behavioral Objective	Assessment Items
Section III:	
1. Interpret Texas laws pertaining to shoplifting.	4*
2. Identify the proper procedures used in the apprehension of a shoplifter.	11, 23
3. Compare the arrest procedures for juveniles and adult shoplifters.	19*
4. Appraise the effect of a police record on a juvenile and on an adult.	9, 12, 14,* 16

* Denotes objectives which had significant test items

TABLE 2

ITEM ANALYSIS FOR THE SHOPLIFTING EVALUATION

Percentages of Right and Wrong Responses

		Pre-test		Post-test		Gain/
		%Right	%Wrong	%Right	%Wrong	Loss
Item 1	Experimental	66	37	84	18	18*
	Control	59		61		2
Item 2	Experimental	12	89	77	23	65**
	Control	22		18		4
Item 3	Experimental	16	84	39	61	23*
	Control	.20	.80	.18	.82	.02
Item 4	Experimental	.27	.73	.51	.49	.26**
	Control	.32	.68	.40	.60	.08
Item 5	Experimental	.70	.30	.86	.14	.16*
	Control	.67	.33	.63	.37	-.04
Item 6	Experimental	.18	.82	.65	.35	.47**
	Control	.24	.76	.23	.77	-.01
Item 7	Experimental	.57	.43	.87	.13	.30**
	Control	.67	.33	.61	.39	-.06
Item 8	Experimental	.64	.36	.56	.44	-.08
	Control	.69	.31	.64	.36	.05
Item 9	Experimental	.56	.44	.46	.54	-.10
	Control	.62	.38	.49	.51	-.13
Item 10	Experimental	.30	.70	.21	.77	-.09
	Control	.36	.64	.37	.63	.01
Item 11	Experimental	.90	.10	.97	.03	.07
	Control	.88	.12	.91	.09	.03
Item 12	Experimental	.86	.07	.93	.07	.07
	Control	.83	.14	.86	.14	.03
Item 13	Experimental	.62	.38	.73	.27	.11*
	Control	.70	.30	.64	.36	-.06
Item 14	Experimental	.45	.55	.70	.30	.25**
	Control	.42	.58	.44	.56	.02
Item 15	Experimental	.66	.34	.79	.21	.13*
	Control	.70	.30	.70	.30	.00
Item 16	Experimental	.65	.35	.65	.35	.00
	Control	.65	.35	.61	.39	-.04
Item 17	Experimental	.72	.28	.69	.31	-.03
	Control	.72	.28	.75	.25	.03

TABLE 2, continued

		Pre-test		Post-test		Gain/
		%Right	%Wrong	%Right	%Wrong	Loss
Item 18	Experimental	.18	.82	.38	.62	.20*
	Control	.24	.76	.16	.84	-.08
Item 19	Experimental	.64	.36	.75	.25	.11*
	Control	.70	.30	.70	.30	.00
Item 20	Experimental	.82	.18	.94	.06	.12
	Control	.82	.18	.80	.20	-.02
Item 21	Experimental	.44	.56	.68	.32	.24*
	Control	.45	.55	.54	.46	.09
Item 22	Experimental	.60	.40	.87	.13	.27**
	Control	.61	.39	.68	.32	.07
Item 23	Experimental	.26	.74	.19	.81	-.07
	Control	.28	.72	.21	.79	-.07
Item 24	Experimental	.75	.25	.82	.18	.07
	Control	.80	.20	.74	.26	-.06
Item 25	Experimental	.80	.20	.89	.79	.09
	Control	.78	.22	.11	.21	.01

* Items showing a 10 to 24 per cent gain.
** Items showing more than a 25 per cent gain.

TABLE 3

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR THE SHOPLIFTING EVALUATION

	Sum of Square	Mean Square	Frequency
Item 1	2.1009	2.1009	11.2513*
Item 2	21.8918	21.8918	169.4588*
Item 3	2.9369	2.9369	22.3689*
Item 4	1.2059	1.2059	6.3217*
Item 5	1.9047	1.9047	11.7236*
Item 6	10.4731	10.4731	55.9441*
Item 7	5.7536	5.7536	32.5136*
Item 8	.0314	.0314	.1625
Item 9	.0558	.0558	.2495
Item 10	.3575	.3575	2.1251
Item 11	.0661	.0661	1.0132
Item 12	.1331	.1331	1.3180
Item 13	1.2377	1.2377	7.7021*
Item 14	2.3179	2.3179	11.7755*
Item 15	.2827	.2827	1.6387
Item 16	.0937	.0937	.5760
Item 17	.1919	.1919	1.2636
Item 18	3.4465	3.4465	21.5595*
Item 19	.9955	.9955	6.5615*
Item 20	.8295	.8295	7.6549*
Item 21	1.1160	1.1160	5.6835*
Item 22	2.1207	2.1207	12.2469*
Item 23	.0021	.0021	.0161
Item 24	.3617	.3617	2.7620
Item 25	.4688	.4688	3.2096

P equals .05 level of significance or less
Degree of Freedom in all cases = 1

* Items showing a statistical significance at the .05 level of significance

TABLE 4

ITEM ANALYSIS FOR THE SHOPLIFTING SURVEY

Percentages of Right and Wrong Responses

		Pre-Test		Post-test		Gain/
		%Right	%Wrong	%Right	%Wrong	Loss
Item 1	Experimental	.70	.28	.78	.22	.06
	Control	.72	.30	.72	.28	.00
Item 2	Experimental	.17	.83	.64	.36	.47**
	Control	.58	.42	.64	.36	.06
Item 3	Experimental	.42	.58	.45	.55	.03
	Control	.45	.55	.42	.58	-.03
Item 4	Experimental	.28	.72	.36	.64	.08
	Control	.11	.89	.20	.80	.09
Item 5	Experimental	.45	.55	.43	.57	-.02
	Control	.51	.49	.47	.53	-.04
Item 6	Experimental	.94	.06	.89	.11	-.05
	Control	.95	.05	.94	.06	.01
Item 7	Experimental	.65	.35	.70	.30	.05
	Control	.78	.22	.79	.21	.01
Item 8	Experimental	.84	.16	.83	.17	-.01
	Control	.89	.11	.80	.20	.09
Item 9	Experimental	.39	.61	.46	.54	.07
	Control	.44	.56	.71	.29	.27**
Item 10	Experimental	.87	.13	.86	.14	-.01
	Control	.88	.12	.88	.12	.00
Item 11	Experimental	.50	.50	.53	.47	.03
	Control	.54	.46	.51	.49	.03
Item 12	Experimental	.65	.35	.70	.30	.05
	Control	.73	.27	.63	.37	-.10
Item 13	Experimental	.30	.70	.32	.68	.02
	Control	.28	.72	.31	.69	.03
Item 14	Experimental	.79	.21	.75	.25	-.04
	Control	.87	.13	.83	.17	-.04
Item 15	Experimental	.80	.20	.75	.25	-.05
	Control	.87	.13	.89	.11	.02
Item 16	Experimental	.77	.23	.76	.25	-.01
	Control	.80	.20	.77	.23	-.03
Item 17	Experimental	.30	.70	.37	.63	.07
	Control	.37	.63	.38	.62	.01
Item 18	Experimental	.57	.43	.70	.30	.13*
	Control	.74	.26	.69	.31	.05

TABLE 5

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR THE SHOPLIFTING SURVEY

	Sum of Square	Mean Square	Frequency
Item 1	.0935	.0935	.6836
Item 2	.0183	.0183	.0932
Item 3	.1919	.1919	1.0137
Item 4	.0082	.0082	.0638
Item 5	.0088	.0088	.0442
Item 6	.0735	.0735	1.3927
Item 7	.0735	.0735	.4931
Item 8	.2944	.2944	2.6675
Item 9	.7495	.7495	4.1709*
Item 10	.0010	.0010	.0095
Item 11	.1571	.1571	.8474
Item 12	1.0029	1.0029	7.4437*
Item 13	.0003	.0003	.00019
Item 14	.0001	.0001	.0008
Item 15	.3331	.3331	2.5609
Item 16	.0245	.0245	.1873
Item 17	.2011	.2011	.2532
Item 18	.6905	.6905	3.9866*

P equals .05 level of significance or less
Degree of Freedom in all cases equals 1

* Denotes the item showed statistical significance at the .05 level